

Mashantucket Pequot Tribe

The Mashantucket Pequot tribe is located in Mashantucket, a town in southeastern Connecticut. The tribal population consists of about 383 tribal members with approximately 1,085 acres in trust and about the same number of acres held in fee. The Tribe received federal recognition from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in 1983.

The Mashantucket Pequot Tribe (MPTN) has taken the lead in many environmental management programs in New England. It has gained national recognition from the National Soil Conservation for its created wetlands work and non-point source pollution activities. It has taken the lead in the country for developing a prohibitory rule for its emergency generators and took the lead in several national air initiatives to assist with developing the National Tribal Air Program. It has worked closely with EPA in managing and protecting the Tribes aquifer to safeguard the Tribe's drinking water supply.

Mike Boland, Director of the Natural Resources Protection Department (NRPD) writes that the "NRPD's major responsibilities are to develop and enforce standards and regulations to protect, conserve, and enhance the Tribe's natural resources and related ecosystems. Our goal is to develop and implement natural resource management programs, provide technical support and research and also liaison with federal, state and local environmental entities." Major programs include water resources management, forest management, wildlife management, and ambient air quality management.

Water resource protection and management is perhaps the most important function of the NRPD, monitoring both the quality and quantity of water throughout the watershed.

The tribe has established nearly 100 sampling points for data collection. Stream inflow and outflow, groundwater and surface water elevations are recorded daily. There are three points within the watershed where rainfall is measured. And the tribe conducts quarterly water quality sampling from over 50 wells, streams, ponds and storm water basins. All monitoring allows for quick assessments of any potential changes to water quality and water balance.

The MPTN received a merit award from the Soil and Water Conservation Society, Southern New England Chapter "for their exemplary commitment to protection of their resources through innovative wetland development for stormwater renovation." The tribe has built numerous created wetlands to receive and renovate stormwater runoff from parking lots and roadways.

The Wildlife Management program includes a comprehensive Habitat Management Plan that assesses the wildlife value of Tribal lands, documents species present on Tribal lands and suggests courses of action to increase wildlife value - such as prescribed burns, controlled hunts and control of exotic species.

The tribe has conducted a comprehensive fox population dynamics and ecology study. The fox study examines its life cycle, location of den sites, determines effects of coyotes on distribution and home ranges of fox and examines social organization of fox in suburban areas. Similar, but less exhaustive studies have been conducted on other species including fishers (similar to weasels.)

The Air Quality program includes detailed inventories of all fixed combustion equipment, all fueled by natural gas, and consumption rates. The NRPD works closely with the engineering personnel to further reduce emission levels.

Education is an integral function of the NRPD, whether it be environmental education such as participation in the summer youth program, internships, or offering training opportunities to Career Development participants in the environmental protection field.

The NRPD also provides technical support to other Tribal programs such as minimizing the environmental impacts of construction and use of golf courses.

According to Jeff Skinner, former director of the NRPD, “the Tribal Nation has put considerable resources and effort into these programs and projects in order to better assess and protect against potential negative effects on the environment.

Councilman Thomas provides this insight, “ we do not own or ever control this circle of life - we are simply a small part of it. We try to help the earth mother as she sustains and teaches us and our children.”